

HURRICANE MITCH RECONSTRUCTION UPDATE



USAID/Nicaragua Hurricane Mitch Reconstruction Program

(U.S. Millions of Dollars)	\$103.6
Public Health	30.6
Economic Reactivation	53.5
Disaster Mitigation	6.6
Education	4.5
Municipal Infrastructure	2.9
Transparency and Accountability	1.0
Food Aid	4.5



Departments of Nicaragua
Affected by Hurricane Mitch

OFFERING FARMERS ALTERNATIVES FOR RECOVERY

Cinco Pinos, Nicaragua—Upon arriving at this remote town on Nicaragua's northern border, visitors wonder how it got its name Cinco Pinos, "Five Pines" when there doesn't seem to be any pine trees in sight. However, traveling just beyond the town limits the pines soon appear, thinned out by the ravages of nature and man but surviving. The same could be said about this municipality. Cinco Pinos was an area particularly hard hit by Hurricane Mitch in October 1998. Farmers lost their entire crops from the torrential rains. The next year they were hit with a drought and lost all their crops again, two years in a row.

A USAID-financed agriculture recovery program through Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is finally offering some hope for the inhabitants of this region.

CRS received \$6.3 million



The USAID/CRS project has provided 84 drip irrigation systems to farmers in the Cinco Pinos area.



Farmers like Gregorio Carvajal are beginning to recover after losing crops during Hurricane Mitch and a drought the following year.

from USAID's Hurricane Mitch Reconstruction Program to help farmers recover and raise their production levels through environmentally sound farming methods. The USAID/CRS project, through a revolving credit fund, has financed drip irrigation systems, improved seeds, earthworm composting, poultry breeding, silos for grain storage and the introduction of high income crops. The project also provides farmers with technical assistance and training in environmental protection such as soil conservation and in financial and marketing strategies. More than 19,000 families in Mitch affected areas are participating in the project.

In the area of Cinco Pinos, working through local agricultural extensionists, the USAID/CRS project

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OFFERING FARMERS ALTERNATIVES...

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is benefiting 2,663 families with approximately \$432,000 in financing.

Gregorio Carvajal lost his entire corn and bean crop during Hurricane Mitch. The next year a drought wiped him out and sparse rainfall this season resulted in lower than average yields. Always at the mercy of nature, Carvajal was unable to recover from the hurricane damage. Now, with the help of the USAID/CRS project, Carvajal set up a small drip irrigation system on a 15 square meter plot, which allowed him to plant a variety of vegetables during the six-month long dry season, a period when farmers' land sit idle. Maria Haydee Rodriguez, Carvajal's wife, received nine hens and a rooster through the project for poultry breeding and egg production. Carvajal also purchased a silo on credit from the project that will enable the family to store grains for consumption and for selling when prices are more favorable. Carvajal learned how to use earthworms for composting, which has reduced his costs for chemical fertilizers. He has already harvested and sold vegetables. And Rodriguez, who received training in poultry breeding, will soon be selling eggs.

"Finally, we have some hope of recovering," said Carvajal. "The project has made a great difference in our lives and has shown us that growing vegetables with irrigation is an alternative for us in the future."

Santos Alberto Carcache maintains a neatly organized plot of tomatoes, green peppers, carrots and



A group of women, whose families participate in the USAID/CRS project, supplement their incomes by making unique baskets out of pine needles. Other women beneficiaries are learning how to raise poultry and farm with drip irrigation.

beets irrigated with a drip system. He protects his crops from wind and soil erosion with "live barriers" of plantain trees and pineapple plants, a method he learned from the project. Like other farmers in the area, Carcache is finally beginning to recover after two years of crop losses.

The project has also increased business for Juan Bustamante, who produces the metal silos for the project. Bustamante has already sold 130 silos this year.

"Farmers have seen how others benefited from storing grains in silos and are now convinced of the positive impact the silos have on increasing their income."

Bustamante is also trying his hand at horticulture using drip irrigation and has already had favorable results.

"In the past we were tied to traditional crops and dependent on weather conditions. Now thanks to the project, we are trying new crops and methods," said Bustamante. "And this is just the beginning, we will continue moving ahead."



With credit through the USAID/CRS project, a group of producers are increasing their incomes through an environmentally friendly enterprise. They set up a nursery with 50,000 plants that will be sold to nearby municipalities for reforestation.

Economic Reactivation

USAID's \$53.5 million agricultural program encourages farming methods that will help restore the economic livelihood for approximately 100,000 farmers while protecting the environment. The economic reactivation program includes rehabilitating and improving farms through crop diversification, community irrigation systems and better farming methods that will increase yields and protect the environment. This includes repairing 1,400 km of rural roads, clearing over 1,200 km of watercourse and training 35,000 small farmers to use environmentally sustainable practices.



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